

Village Church of Barrington Congregational Meeting Minutes –
Sunday 13 November 2016

6:41 PM: Bruce Rhodes opened the meeting in prayer.

Election Of Officers – Bruce Rhodes

The following people were up for election via a ballot vote:

Elder: Dave Fuller*, Bruce Rhodes*, Anthony Tako*

Deacon: Kyle Jodrey, Byron Smythe*

Officer: Ron Hirschhorn*, Richard Mica

*=Denotes an incumbent standing for another term.

All candidates were approved by the Congregation.

Pastor's Report – David Jones

The Pastor's Report is attached.

Financial Report – Dave Cartwright

Closed 2015 with a deficit of \$16K

2015-2016 Audit

-A clean opinion was given to VCB for its bookkeeping practices.

-1 significant audit adjustment was cited. VCB revealed to the auditor that 50% (\$23,514.00) of Carlson architectural fees were written off. This was mutually agreed to with the auditor.

General Operating Fund:

Year to Date:

Actual = -\$99K

Budget = -\$47K

Variance = -\$51.6K

Dave reviewed the current VCB funding balances.

Budget Review – Rod Elliott

Rod discussed the current budget of \$1.9M. He is currently looking to adjust and/or cut some activities if giving does not increase. Previous years of 2013-2015 saw December giving was significantly higher. Hoping for a similar result in 2016.

During the Q & A session a suggestion was made to make specific needs known to the general congregation in hopes of raising the giving totals.

ATTB Update – Rod E and Bob Schroeder

Architectural plans are not yet completed. The projected date is 30 November.
Total pledges to date = \$2.1M. 29% (\$609K) has been given thus far.

Bob showed pictures of renovated areas. He also explained how the newly purchased Trane HVAC unit replaces 3 old units in the Administrative wing.

Per the May 15, 2016 Congregational Meeting, the amount of \$238,750.00 was approved for various building project updates. Actual costs for various efforts equate to \$128,183.00. Thus, \$110,567.00 remains from the amount approved by the Deacon Board and VCB Congregation.

The following motion was made to the Congregation to continue renovations and utilize the ATTB fund:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Doors: | \$16K |
| Carpet: | \$63K |
| <u>Contingency:</u> | <u>\$6K</u> |
| Total: | \$85K |

Motion: The motion was approved.

Prayer Requests – Bruce Rhodes

- Look for and welcome newcomers
- Wisdom from God for VCB staff and leaders.
- Unity for the U.S.A. Regarding the recent presidential results.

8:13 PM: Bruce Rhodes closed the meeting in prayer.

Senior Pastor Report

November 13, 2016

Thank you for taking time out of your schedules to be here tonight. I appreciate your concern for what God is doing in and through the Village Church of Barrington. In these next few minutes, let me share some of the great things going on in the church, as well as some of the challenges.

Blessings

Entrusted with a Child's Heart

It is my sense that all of our ministries kicked off strong this Fall. One of the ministries I'm most excited about is *Entrusted with a Child's Heart*, taught by Betsy Corning on Wednesday mornings. When they first started in September, I was in my office, studying Scripture. Then children started crying in the room below me—one of them so loudly it was like he was in the office with me! I admit to being a bit cranky that morning—maybe not to the level of the Grinch, but still a bit cranky. So I go downstairs to investigate, and here are all of these little babies, having a hard time being away from mom. I asked, “Whose babies are these?” They told me, “These are the Entrusted babies.” My whole attitude changed. What a *great* problem to have! Since then, I have stuck my head inside the classroom. We have about fifty new moms from all over learning how to parent their children biblically. What a blessing!

Village in Action

I am also excited about what is happening with our Village in Action team. This team, under the able leadership of Julie Fischer, empowers our body to serve the community outside the walls of our church. We currently have five full ministry partners: **Love INC, By the Hand, Breakthrough Urban Ministries, Youth for Christ** and **Kids' Hope**. We don't just want to send a check. In order to be a full partner, there must be a ministry liaison from VCB, as well as volunteers from the church. Then we provide financial support. We also have two food pantries with which we partner: **Faith Acres** and **Cuba Township**. These ministries tend to be holistic, helping people physically, educationally, socially and spiritually.

All our partners seem to be doing well, although we currently have an issue with Youth for Christ, which meets at Barrington High School. Laura Lane was our liaison to that ministry. When she got married and started attending the church where her husband serves as a pastor, she stepped out of that role. Unfortunately, no one has filled her shoes. And because there is no liaison, we currently have no one serving in that ministry. Unless someone steps up soon, we might need to suspend our relationship with Youth for Christ. That would be sad, because it is a great ministry. Perhaps one of you feels called to do that. If so, talk with Julie after the meeting.

We also have two emerging partnerships that have the potential to become full partners: Informed Choices (a crisis pregnancy center) and Pacific Garden Mission down in the city. I am particularly excited about Informed Choices, because it is about saving babies that might otherwise be aborted. We need to pray against the scourge of abortion in our country. But we must also love on

those who are in a difficult spot with a crisis pregnancy. If you would like to be involved in serving in either one of these worthy ministries, talk with Julie.

Church Planting

You will remember that we are part of a network of eight Free Churches called Reach Chicago. We partner together for the purpose of church planting in the Chicago area. We had four men complete a residency in the Spring, and they are currently out building their core groups. While none of them has yet launched publicly, three of the four are gaining momentum: Woodstock, West Dundee and Ukrainian Village in Chicago. They will probably launch this winter. After jumping out to a quick start, the Palatine plant seems stuck at the moment; we are trying to get it unstuck. Pray for these men and their families—that God would give them favor in their communities; that they would be on mission; that they would not lack for resources; and that they will impact their communities for Christ.

We'll let you know when they launch.

Reach Chicago is currently assessing last year's residency and making tweaks for the future. We hope to offer another residency next fall. We are currently recruiting toward that end. Pray that the Lord will raise up strong candidates from among our churches, or else send us strong candidates from the outside.

Facility Upgrades

Sanctuary Sound System. Have you noticed a difference in sound quality since the new speakers were installed in the sanctuary upstairs? I have. The choir is much more intelligible, and the sound is more uniform. No more hot spots and dead spots. Some of the money came from Jim's media budget. But a chunk of it was provided by an estate gift we received from a former member who passed away. We thank the Lord for his provision.

Gym Stage. Matt and Tiffany designed a new look, and Crouter put a team of people together to implement it. It looks fantastic! It has warmed up the gym significantly. If you haven't seen it, you should come down for a service and check it out.

Staff

Let me give you some updates on our staff. One of the strengths we have as a church is our staff. Almost everything that goes on here is under their leadership, either directly or indirectly. The Lord has blessed us with a good team.

- *Bookkeeper Position.* Our most recent hire is Jean Gilly, who is serving as our new bookkeeper. Jean and her husband Chuck have been actively involved at VCB for about thirty years. We are excited to have her aboard. Jean replaces Jane Shourd, who is leaving to work with her husband's business. Jane has served faithfully and cheerfully for 17 years. We are going to miss her. She is remaining on until the end of the month, so she can train Jean.

- *Admins.* Tara Marineau and Jo Blanchette were hired to replace Laura Lane. Each of them works part-time. Bobbie Gustafson has dropped to part-time, so she can watch her grandson, little Emerson. These ladies, along with Stephanie Jurek, are under the capable leadership of our office manager, Dana Leahy, who also serves as Rod's administrative assistant and mine. I cannot forget Matt Haynes, who does a great job supporting Jim with media arts and technology. We are blessed by our administrative staff who do so much to support the ministries of the church.
- *Operations.* We are also blessed by our operations staff. Bob Schroeder has been working tirelessly to get our building into better shape. He's always got multiple projects going on at once. But I also love his heart for the Lord and his passion to make disciples. He's our blue-collar pastor. He oversees Leon, Facunda and Jerry, who keep our facility in a state of operational readiness, along with Joe Matlachowski, who locks up at night. We are thankful for their hard work.
- *Director of Community Life.* Larry Jacob, the newest member of our pastoral staff (8 months), has been running around the like the Energizer Bunny, connecting and caring for people. We are starting to see the fruit of the seeds he has been planting since he arrived.
- *Downstairs Worship Leader.* Matt Beckler has been with us for almost a year now, and is hitting his stride. Whenever you have a change at a high profile position like worship leader, it usually impacts attendance negatively at first. But then new people come, and it all balances out. We are seeing that dynamic at work downstairs. I love Matt's heart for the Gospel.
- *Remaining Pastors.* As mentioned in the services this weekend, Rod is celebrating his second anniversary at VCB. We are also thankful for the tenure of our remaining ministry staff: Val (4 years); Wes (4 years); me (6 years); Gordy (8 years); Tim (14 years); and Jim (23 years). The average tenure among our ministry staff is seven years. It might shock you to know that the national average is only **3.6 years**. The Free Church fares a little better (about 5 years). What is really sad about that? Studies have shown that the typical pastor *does not hit his stride until sometime between year five and eight*. So many pastors do not stick around long enough to experience the "sweet spot." Our pastors are not church-hoppers, jumping from church to church in order to climb the ecclesiastical ladder. They are putting down roots here. This not only speaks well of our staff—it also speaks well of the church. We are blessed.

So with the staff we have, we believe that we are well-positioned to impact this world for Christ. Let's give them all a hand.

Challenges

Attendance

If you pay attention to the bulletin, you may have noticed that our attendance has been down from where it was a year ago, and even more from where it was two years ago. Here's a chart of our average attendance by year, going back ten years:

Our attendance was flat for the five years between 2007 and 2011. We were consistently averaging 588 people each weekend. We began growing in the Fall of 2011, when the Saturday night service was launched, and later the Downstairs Worship. We continued to grow until the Fall of 2014, when the Bridge was launched. At that time, we sent out a total of 110 people. So we expected attendance to drop, and it did. The next year we were down to 694—a difference of 86 people. So our losses were offset somewhat by a slight gain. What we did not expect is that attendance would continue to drop. This year we have been averaging 634 people per weekend.

At first, we were scratching our heads. But then we began to analyze the departures. What we learned is that the problem was even worse than we knew. A total of 240 members and regular attenders had stopped worshipping at VCB since the Bridge was launched two years ago, and that is not including the people who initially planted with the Bridge. So we analyzed why people left, to see if there was one or two dominant reasons. What we found was a smorgasbord of reasons. Look at this chart:

By God's grace, things are beginning to look up again. I have not yet seen the numbers for this weekend, but two weeks ago was 641 people and last weekend was 693—our biggest attendance so far this Fall. So I am cautiously optimistic that we are recovering. But it has been hard.

Our church is not the only congregation experiencing this phenomenon. I have been talking with other pastors, both in Chicagoland and around the country, and many of them are reporting a ten percent decrease in attendance for no apparent reason. One study I read reported that only 7 percent of churches in the United States are growing right now. So there is some macro trend that we are kicking up against.

Some have wondered if we are going to cancel the Downstairs Worship, since attendance has been lagging. We do not have any plans to do that, especially since we seem to be on the rebound. But even if we were flat, many of the people who attend that service go there because they like it. There's an old saying in ministry, "What you win them with is what you win them to." If we were to cancel that service, we might lose some folks. So we plan to continue offering four services.

Conversion Growth

We are not seeing much in the way of conversion growth. We praise the Lord for children who have made professions of faith, but am unaware of any adult conversions in the last six months. Does anyone know of any?

Now it is one thing if we are faithfully sharing the Gospel, and people are rejecting it. With its prosperity and temptations, this culture is becoming increasingly difficult to reach for Christ. But could it be that we are not sharing our faith?

Please continue to pray through the names that were submitted. Look for opportunities to share your faith. Invite unbelievers to come to church with you. We need to take new ground for the kingdom. We need to do our part to fulfill the Great Commission here in Barrington and the surrounding communities.

Connections

Larry has been doing a great job with our connections ministry, but there is still room to grow. We have gotten some reports from visitors that they felt our church was unfriendly. Thankfully, not everyone reports this experience. But some do. We need to be on the lookout for those who are new, and give them a warm welcome. Also, try to connect them to someone else.

We have also heard from some individuals who attended our church for a season that they had a hard time getting connected, and eventually left. That breaks my heart. Of course, it takes two to tango. But let's make sure that the fault is not on our end.

One idea that Larry and I have talked about is empowering some outgoing people to be connectors in our various services. Not greeters or ushers standing by the door, but connectors inside the worship center, working the room. Todd Berge used to do this naturally, but he is gone now. We need others to step up. Talk to Larry if you are interested.

Giving

When your attendance goes down, that affects your giving. I do not want to say too much here, because David Cartwright and Rod Elliott will be talking about this momentarily in more detail. Suffice it say that our giving is currently down 14 percent from our calendarized budget, and 17 percent from we were at this time last year. It was right around this time last year that our giving started trending down.

ATTB giving is ahead of schedule, however. I get asked periodically if people are merely taking their general fund giving and putting it toward the building instead. Our financial secretary Laurel Culver examined the giving records and did not find that to be the case. It appears that those who made pledges to the campaign have not diminished their normal giving.

So we need to have a strong December to get back on track. If the Lord blesses you with the ability to do some discretionary giving at year end, please know that your church has a need. Thanks to the many of you who are faithful stewards.

Potential Loss of Religious Liberties

Our society is becoming increasingly hostile to Christians. Those of us who refuse to bow to the gods of same-sex attraction and transgenderism are being accused of bigotry and hatred. The irony, of course, is those who shout such things do not realize their own bigotry and hatred.

- *Gay Marriage.* A bi-vocational pastor from Georgia was fired from his government job because he preached against homosexual acts. I've received two emails from unrecognized sources, one purportedly from a gay couple asking to be married in our church—the other from someone requesting counseling for homosexual desires. Both seemed like they were fishing, so I did not respond. It is just a matter of time before a gay or lesbian couple shows up at our church.
- *Transgenderism.* We will not allow a man to go in the women's restrooms. That might land us in trouble at some point.

We may be protested. Our services may be disrupted. We may lose our tax-exempt status. We might be fined. Who knows? Maybe I'll even be put in jail at some point. I don't want to be an alarmist, but we should consider these things soberly and pray against them.

Not sure if the recent election is going to change this.

Some Christians are like, "Bring on the persecution. It will be good for the church." It is easy for them to say that now. I wonder how they will respond if persecution actually comes? Paul said that we should pray for governmental leaders, so that *'that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way'* (1 Tim 2:2). Jesus said, *'When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next'* (Matt 10:23). Sometimes persecution is unavoidable, and we must stand firm as Christians, and weather it as best we can. But we should not seek it out with a sense of bravado.

Changes/Improvements

Rite of Passage

As you know, one of our values is intergenerational ministry. We make a big deal about rites of passage. Last year, we did not have enough critical mass to go forward with the rite of passage ceremony (we had fished the pond, I think), so we decided to hold off until 2017. Also, we felt like participation was waning a bit because we held the ceremony on Sunday night. This time we are going to do it a bit differently. Instead of Sunday night, we are actually going to do it in our weekend services, building the service around it. We feel that this is more in keeping with intergenerational ministry being one of our core values. This is going to be done the last weekend in April, a couple of weeks after Easter. If you have a young adult in your home who has not yet been through the rite of passage, we would encourage you to take part. Even if you don't have a young adult, let's give them a warm welcome to the adult community.

Service Times

You will remember that we gave a survey on the proposed service time changes. Here are the latest stats I have: 82 percent were positive (59 percent) or neutral (23 percent). Only 18 percent were negative. Even of the ones that were negative, several indicated that it was merely their personal preference, and not a big deal for them. One person said that he might leave the church.

So we feel strong support to try the service change. Our plan is to start the new times on Sunday Jan 8 (Saturday night is unaffected). There will be a 9:00 AM service and a 10:30 service. Sunday school for children at 9:00 and children's church at 10:45. Equipping Center classes will be offered at both hours. The Downstairs Worship service will run concurrently with the 10:30 service upstairs. We hope that you come for both hours and take advantage of the educational opportunities. Or attend at one and serve at the other.

We believe that this is going to make it easier for people, especially young families.

We will be rolling out a communication plan in the intervening weeks. If you have any questions about these changes, we can address those now. I may not know the answers myself, but Rod or Gordy or Wes probably will.

Conclusion

Despite these challenges, we have much to be thankful for. I thank the Lord for this church. It is my privilege to be the Senior Pastor here. Thanks to you members, who demonstrate your commitment to Christ by faithfully attending worship, by serving and by giving. Humanly speaking, you are the backbone of this church. Of course, Christ is the cornerstone. My prayer is that what was said of the early church would be said of us as well: *'So the church . . . had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied'* (Acts 9:31).

